

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

# WIOA Annual Statewide Narrative Performance Report

---

Program Year 2021



670-664-1758  
[www.cnmiswdb@gov.mp](mailto:www.cnmiswdb@gov.mp)  
[cnmiwioa@dol.gov.mp](mailto:cnmiwioa@dol.gov.mp)  
Gov't Bldg #1353 Mednilla Ave  
Capiol Hill

# Table of Content

---

1. Overview
2. Waiver
3. Effectiveness In Serving Employers
4. Evaluation and Research
5. Customer Satisfaction
6. Progress Towards Strategic Vision and Goals
7. Sector Strategies and Career Pathways
8. Performance Accountability
9. Statewide Activities
10. National Dislocated Worker Grant
11. Success Stories
12. Challenges

# Overview

---

Like states and territories that rely heavily on the Leisure and Hospitality industry, the CNMI continues to face challenges as its economy has yet to fully rebound from the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This Annual Narrative Performance Report highlights the activities of the CNMI's Workforce System comprised of the Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs administered by the CNMI's Department of Labor Workforce Investment Agency, Title II Adult Basic Education administered by the Northern Marianas College Adult Basic Education; and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Services administered by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation under the Office of the Governor for Program Year 2021.

# Waiver

---

The waiver on the statutory and regulatory provisions of the WIOA Section 101(b)(1)(c)(ii) and the corresponding regulation at 20 CFR 679.110(b)(3)(ii)(B) remained active in the first quarter of Program Year 2021 or through September 30, 2021.

Since the approval of the above mentioned waiver, the CNMI's Registered Apprenticeship Program established its first approved RAP with Pacific BioMedical Services, Inc. Its Vice-President, Stan Benavente, was appointed in January 2022 to serve on the CNMI's State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) as the representative of Joint Labor/Management Registered Apprenticeship.

There were no waivers submitted in the modified WIOA Unified State Plan for Program Years 2022-2023.

# Effectiveness In Serving Employers

---

The CNMI's WIOA Core Partners comprised of the Titles I, II, and IV participated in the Effectiveness In Serving Employers indicator pilot for Program Year 2021. Through joint work group sessions with the core partners, it was mutually agreed to repeat the pilot on the approaches:

- Employer Penetration Rate to measure the percentage of employers using services out of all employers in the territory; and
- Repeat Business Customers Rate to measure the percentage of employers receiving services in a given year who also received services within the previous three years.

Aggregate data collected from the core programs produced the following results:

Employer Services	Establishment Count	
Employer Information and Support Services	108	
Workforce Recruitment Assistance	113	
Engaged in Strategic Planning/Economic Development	75	
Accessing Untapped Labor Pools	27	
Training Services	130	
Incumbent Worker Training Services	23	
Rapid Response/Business Downsizing Assistance	20	
Planning Layoff Response	20	
Pilot Approaches	Numerator	Rate
	Denominator	
Retention with Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarters After Exit Rate		
Employer Penetration Rate	144	29.8%
	484	
Repeat Business Customers Rate	36	25.0%
	144	

In PY2021, pilot approaches measuring the effectiveness of serving employers achieved higher rates. An increase of 18.7% was realized in the indicator Employer Penetration Rate and Repeat Business Customers Rate up by 10.7% as compared to the previous program year. The increases are attributed to the mass outreach and business engagement with employer networks such as the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, Society for Human Resource Management, Rotary Club of Saipan, and community events.

---

# Evaluation & Research

---

As required in WIOA, states and territories must coordinate with the CNMI's State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) and the core programs to conduct evaluations of the Title I activities to promote continuous improvement, research and test innovative services and strategies, in order to achieve high levels of performance and outcomes.

Through the coordinated efforts of the Planning, Evaluation, and Assessment committee of the SWDB and the core programs, a Request for Proposal (RFP) or RFP22-DOL-WIA-42200140 was issued on August 29, 2022 and closed September 12, 2022. The purpose of the project is to conduct an impact study of the effectiveness of Work Based Learning (WBL) strategies on WIOA in-school and out-of-school youth participants' educational and employment outcomes. One proposal was received and is currently under committee review.

In a concerted effort to build and strengthen the capacity within the CNMI's core partners, the territory administrators of the WIOA core programs applied and selected to participate in the technical assistance opportunity by USDOL ETA – Peer Learning Cohort on Evaluation cohort 5 or EvalPLC5. Administrators and key program staff engaged with state and national subject matter experts (SME's) to utilize the Evaluation Toolkits to self-assess evaluation readiness, design, and implementation strengths and challenges; participate in facilitated virtual workgroup meetings to build knowledge, peer learning, and support teams to develop future evaluation plans; work with a coach who provides resources, expert advice, and peer connections tailored to the territories needs and opportunities for improvement; and share promising practices across participating states. The CNMI team completed the EvalPLC in the spring of 2022.

The team represents the WIOA Core Programs: Title I – DOL Workforce Investment Agency, Title II – NMC Adult Basic Education, and Title IV – Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. As part of the EvalPLC training, the team collaborated to design a capstone project that is focused on the development of a comprehensive online orientation of the CNMI's workforce system (WIOA core programs) that incorporates a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach. The CNMI's core programs are working to finalize and launch the online orientation to all websites and provide results in the next report.

# Customer Satisfaction

The CNMI Title I program continues to utilize the HireMarianas Virtual One Stop (VOS) to quantify customer satisfaction. All registered users, individual jobseekers and businesses receives a survey to the email address on record upon successful registration. The survey queries customer feedback on user type; purpose of use; ease of access and understanding; individual needs, and overall experience of the VOS.

In the program year, there were four hundred ninety-seven (497) VOS registered users. Of the 497, only 26 individuals provided feedback to the survey or a 5% response rate and the majority or approximately 69% were filing for UI (PUA) and only 11% were in search for jobs. The charts below provide full results of the survey.

Improving customer response rate is a priority. As part of our continuous improvement plan, surveys are being revamped to develop a standardize survey for both jobseekers and business customers. Dissemination of the surveys will include verbal notification by program staff, improved access by making surveys available on paper, computer-based, web-based, and other available formats.

Which type of user best describes you?		
Answer	Number of Times Answered	Percent of Times Answered
<a href="#">Jobseeker</a>	8	30.8%
<a href="#">Other</a>	18	69.2%
Total: 26		

Indicate the primary purpose for which you will be using this information		
Answer	Number of Times Answered	Percent of Times Answered
<a href="#">Job Search</a>	3	11.5%
<a href="#">Filing for Unemployment</a>	18	69.2%
<a href="#">Other</a>	5	19.2%
Total: 26		

It was easy to find information		
Answer	Number of Times Answered	Percent of Times Answered
<a href="#">Strongly Agree</a>	6	23.1%
<a href="#">Agree</a>	9	34.6%
<a href="#">Neither Agree or Disagree</a>	10	38.5%
<a href="#">Disagree</a>	1	3.8%
Total: 26		

The data was easy to understand		
Answer	Number of Times Answered	Percent of Times Answered
<a href="#">Strongly Agree</a>	5	19.2%
<a href="#">Agree</a>	8	30.8%
<a href="#">Neither Agree or Disagree</a>	11	42.3%
<a href="#">Disagree</a>	2	7.7%
Total: 26		

The data met my needs		
Answer	Number of Times Answered	Percent of Times Answered
<a href="#">Strongly Agree</a>	7	26.9%
<a href="#">Agree</a>	7	26.9%
<a href="#">Neither Agree or Disagree</a>	10	38.5%
<a href="#">Disagree</a>	2	7.7%
Total: 26		

Overall, how would you rate your visit with this website?		
Answer	Number of Times Answered	Percent of Times Answered
<a href="#">Excellent</a>	9	34.6%
<a href="#">Good</a>	8	30.8%
<a href="#">Fair</a>	2	7.7%
<a href="#">Poor</a>	1	3.8%
<a href="#">No Opinion</a>	6	23.1%
Total: 26		

Business engagements on all three islands were conducted to provide information on WIOA and the Apprenticeship State Expansion Program. On Tinian 22 people attended and 18 submitted their surveys. On Rota, 18 people attended, and 16 people submitted their surveys. Saipan had 11 attendees and all of which submitted their survey. As part of the evaluation process, participants received a questionnaire via Google Forms at the end of the presentation. Information was gathered through multiple-choice and open-ended questions that assessed the participants' relative experience of the presentation.

The CNMI is satisfied with the overall business engagement outreach survey samples. The average survey participation was 85%. Hundred percent response rate is problematic because participation is anonymous. To increase response rate, we will include a reminder to complete the survey in a follow-up "Thank you messages" to all attendees.

The majority of the participant responses were "Strongly Agree" or "Agreed" to the following questions:

- The presentations were very interesting.
- The presentations will help me and my company/organization.
- I found the information very helpful.
- I recommend the presentations to other companies/organizations.
- The presenters communicated their information well.
- The presenters helped me with my questions.
- I would be interested in attending a follow-up, more advanced presentation in the future.

On all three islands, the majority of participant responses regarding the length of the presentation and understand of the material presented were: "Right length of time" and "Easy to follow."



# Progress Towards Vision & Goals

---

The CNMI's SWDB together with the Core Programs, remain steadfast in their vision "to integrate a seamless workforce development system that meets the needs of employers, job seekers, workers, and youths in order to supply quality employees for the dynamic economy of the CNMI."

During the program year, the CNMI's SWDB submitted the modifications to the Unified State Plan that included updates to the goals for the continuous improvements to the workforce system to increase the pipeline of skilled workers and meet the needs of the employers to prosper economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. The goals of the SWDB were updated as listed below:

Goal 1: Strengthen the collaboration of the workforce development system for the expansion of a comprehensive, integrated, effective, and streamlined service delivery system.

Goal 2: Enhance Business Service strategies to increase strategic partnerships and engagement to develop customized services that aligns with the present-day economy across programs of the workforce development system.

Goal 3: Integrate an innovative customer-centered service delivery model focused on the customer's job-driven occupational and training needs that includes enhanced supportive services to address barriers that may impede participation.

Goal 4: Increase the skills of jobseekers for high-quality jobs and careers in demand-driven industries that align with the workforce needs of employers that lead to employment, reemployment, and retention.

# Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

---

Sector partnerships remains a priority of the CNMI's workforce system to ensure we meet existing and future needs of employers and jobseekers. Registered apprenticeships (RA) has been the driving force in engagements with business networks to promote customized sector strategies and career pathways to meet their respective workforce needs.

Despite the slow recovery of the CNMI's economy from COVID-19, the CNMI remains driven to actively recruit employers and enlist incumbent and prospective workers into an RA through participation in outreach events and individualized meetings targeting businesses in demand driven industries that include Construction and Maintenance; Related Hospitality Industry Sectors; Food Service Industry; Allied Health and Safety; Management and Accounting; and Information Technology.

This program year, the CNMI Registered Apprenticeship Partners held its first "Constructing Apprenticeship Programs" workshop targeting registered apprenticeship as a viable workforce strategy for the construction industry. The workshop provided employers insights on how to custom-build apprenticeships, benefits, and linkage to workforce programs and educational partners.

Other strategies to promote sector partnerships and career pathways include work based learning opportunities in work experience/internships; transitional jobs; customized training; incumbent worker training; and on-the-job training.

The Title I programs maintains a strong linkage with the CNMI's Public School System Career Technical Education (PSS CTE) program. Leveraging of WIOA Youth services to support the ongoing Summer Enrichment College and Career Pathway Initiative Boot Camps in Construction, Education, Hospitality, Nursing, and Entrepreneurship continued in the program year. Discussions to expand these programs into high-quality pre-apprenticeship are ongoing.

# Performance Accountability

## Performance Measures and Goals

The CNMI's performance targets were negotiated with the USDOL ETA for the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs. Program Year 2021 targets for the WIOA established indicators of performance and actual results are highlighted in the table below for the WIOA Title I programs. As shown, the Adult and Youth programs exceeded the negotiated performance indicator target in all measures. The Dislocated Worker Program exceeded the performance indicator measures Median Earnings and Measurable Skill Gains. Actual Dislocated Worker Employment 2nd Quarter After Exit 38.2% fell below the target 50.0%; Employment 2nd Quarter After Exit 44.8% was below the negotiated target 50.0%; and Credential Attainment actual 50.0% failed to meet the target of 66.5%.

	INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE	NEGOTIATED TARGET	ACTUAL	% INCREASE/ DECREASE
ADULT	Employment Rate 2nd quarter after exit	50.0%	<b>52.8%</b>	5.600%
	Employment Rate 4th quarter after exit	50.0%	<b>52.2%</b>	4.400%
	Median Earnings	\$ 3,200	<b>\$4,002</b>	25.063%
	Credential Rate	66.5%	<b>100.0%</b>	50.376%
	Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%	<b>78.5%</b>	57.000%
YOUTH	Employment/Education/Training Rate 2nd quarter after exit	50.0%	<b>57.1%</b>	14.200%
	Employment/Education/Training Rate 4th quarter after exit	50.0%	<b>57.1%</b>	14.200%
	Median Earnings	\$ 3,000	<b>\$ 3,652</b>	21.733%
	Credential Rate	66.0%	<b>66.7%</b>	1.061%
	Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%	<b>73.8%</b>	47.600%
DISLOCATED WORKER	Employment Rate 2nd quarter after exit	50.0%	<b>38.2%</b>	-23.600%
	Employment Rate 4th quarter after exit	50.0%	<b>44.8%</b>	-10.400%
	Median Earnings	\$ 3,200	<b>\$4,160</b>	30.000%
	Credential Rate	66.5%	<b>50.0%</b>	-24.812%
	Measurable Skill Gains	50.0%	<b>75.0%</b>	50.000%

## Common Exit Policy

The CNMI's Common Exit Policy developed in coordination with the SWDB Policy Committee occurs when a participant, enrolled in multiple DOL WIA administered partner programs, has not received services from any DOL WIA administered program to which the common exit applies for at least 90 consecutive days, and no future participant level services are scheduled.

A participant who receives concurrent participant services in whole or in part from the partner programs listed below, must complete participant services from all programs in which the participant is co-enrolled in order for the "common exit" to be effectuated. When a participant receives services from multiple programs, the most recent qualifying, participant-level service end date is the date of the auto-exit. Follow-up services, self-service and informational only services provided to participants do not extend the exit date.

This common exit policy applies to participants co-enrolled in the following DOL-WIA administered programs utilizing the same Management Information System or MIS:

1. WIOA Adult Program;
2. WIOA Dislocated Worker Program;
3. WIOA Youth Program; and
4. National Dislocated Worker Grant Programs
5. Apprenticeship State Expansion

The Common Exit Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure all ETA-funded partners programs that share the data management system, HireMarianas, is subject to adhere to the existing policy.

## Negotiated Performance Levels Program Year 2022-2023

For Program Years 2022-2023, negotiations were completed in June of 2022. The targets were increased in most performance indicator measures across all Title I programs as shown:

<b>WIOA title I - Adult</b>	<b>PY 2022</b>	<b>PY2023</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	52.6%	52.6%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$4,200	\$4,200
Credential Attainment Rate	80.0%	80.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	75.9%	75.9%
<b>WIOA title I - Dislocated Worker</b>	<b>PY2022</b>	<b>PY2023</b>
Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$4,200	\$4,200
Credential Attainment Rate	66.5%	66.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	71.4%	71.4%
<b>WIOA title I - Youth</b>	<b>PY 2022</b>	<b>PY2023</b>
Education and Employment Rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	57.8%	57.8%
Education and Employment Rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter after Exit	50.0%	50.0%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter after Exit	\$4,000	\$4,000
Credential Attainment Rate	66.6%	66.6%
Measurable Skill Gains	70.0%	70.0%

## Data Validation

In accordance to the federal mandates in the WIOA to conduct data validation, the CNMI reviews on a quarterly active and exited case files to validate data. It provides the timely opportunity to correct findings and improve program performance accountability for our annual performance report. Although not required, we have periodically performed validation at the onset of program participation and eligibility. The ongoing validation of such records during the cycle of participation to exit would provide timely entry of service activities and access of source documentation. We are cognizant that validating all records is a huge undertaking and are optimistic that in doing so would strengthen certification of Quarterly and final Annual Performance Report.

Reports were provided to Program Coordinator to extract Participants from respective Programs Served and Exited among the Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youths. Participant data was then uploaded onto a google sheet per tab by Program: Adult Served, Adult Exited, DW Served, DW Exited, Youth Served, and Youth Exited (creating a total of 6 tabs on one google sheet). The Participant Name, State ID and WIOA App ID were highlighted and randomized by google function. After the data was randomly provided on the sheet were we able to pull the first 50% of participants at random required for data validation sample set.

- VOS generated 152 Adult Served. The intended 50% randomly sampled would have been 76 Adult Served Participants to be data validated. Of the 76 Adult Served set 8 records were validated.
- VOS generated 90 Adults Exited. The intended 50% randomly sampled would have been 45 Adults Exited Participants to be data validated. Of the 45 Adult Exited set 17 records were validated.
- VOS generated 70 Dislocated Workers Served. The intended 50% randomly sampled would have been 35 DW Served Participants to be data validated. Of the 35 DW Served set 5 records were validated.
- VOS generated 45 Dislocated Workers Exited. The intended 50% randomly sampled would have been 23 DW Exited Participants to be data validated. Of the 23 DW Exited set 3 records were validated.
- VOS generated 97 Youth Served. The intended 50% randomly sampled would have been 49 Youth Served Participants to be data validated. Of the 49 Youth Served set 6 records were validated.
- VOS generated 56 Youth Exited. The intended 50% randomly sampled would have been 28 Youth Exited Participants to be data validated. Of the 28 Youth Served set 1 record was validated.

The Table below will provide a summary of the records validated, elements evaluated, and average error rate.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Files Validated</b>	<b>Elements Evaluated</b>	<b>Error Rate</b>
Adults	18	96	5.94
Dislocated Worker	6	96	5.50
Youth	6	98	2.33

The 50% random sampling proved to be a much more difficult number to work with when compared to the actual number that were validated. About ten percent was the average number of records validated for each program. The CNMI is in line with the average passing rate combined 95%. Perhaps, revisiting the policy and procedures on data validation is needed to provide a more manageable process and results. Competing priorities such as on-island and off-island outreaches/training, and case management took time away from our ability to validate the entire 50% of the total program active and exited records.

Documentation of the missing and/or erroneous data have been corrected by November 30th, 2022. For Exited Participants, we have elected to not reopened the cases but rather case note the finding(s), provide justification, and source documentation to substantiate the correction of error.

Per our approved Data Validation Policy, a passing score is 95% or higher. On various Data Elements, allowable source documents included an electronic record or an item that was on the data management system. However, such electronic records are required to be hard filed to ensure matching of services, dates, and support documents are on both physical file and Virtual Online System (VOS). The element number would be issued a "fail" in the event that hard files do not mimic the participant VOS records and the visa versa. This would ensure that all activity regarding the Participant mirrored its virtual record.

Failed data elements would then require further action. Elements data that did not relate to the Territory or Program were not included in the overall scoring of the participant file record being data validated. The total number of "passing" elements [the numerator] was divided by the total number of "applicable" elements [the denominator] to provide the overall Participant data validation score. For example, data element number 600: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)" did not count towards the denominator because the CNMI does not avail.

Moving forward, scheduling periodic quarterly review and follow up training of case files and pre-validation will be conducted to avoid any delays in meeting the required target numbers. Our case management system additionally produces "soon to exit" reports that is shared with Program Staff to inspect and identify if any further action is required. The sharing of this report counteracts premature or unnecessary soft exit. A review of case files will be conducted on the 15th of the second month of each quarter. Should modification or amendment be required, Program staff must email their request with justification. This email is reviewed both by Director and Program Coordinator for review and determination of action. In compliance of the federal records retention policy, we have set conditions that would provide a checks and balance to any amendment request.



# Statewide Activities

---

As allowed in WIOA, statewide funds were utilized to support the administration of workforce investment activities by the CNMI's State Workforce Development Board and the DOL Workforce Investment Agency. These include an array of activities.

In the program year, the following statewide activities occurred:

- Marketing and Outreach
  - Tinian Business Engagement with Tinian Department of Labor



- Rota Business Engagement with Rota Department of Labor



- National Disability Employment Awareness Month



- Reentry Resource Day



- Northern Marianas Technical Institute Orientation



- Saipan Chamber of Commerce General Membership Meeting





- Rota Department of Labor Career Fair



- Department of Correction Orientation of WIOA Programs



- Construction Apprenticeship Program



# National Dislocated Worker Grant

---

The CNMI continues to administer and implement the National Dislocated Worker Grant to respond to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This grant provides eligible individuals disaster-relief temporary employment and supportive services to minimize the employment and economic impacts of the disaster. Priority is given to individuals whose employment was directly affected by the disaster, COVID-19, followed by other eligibility requirements set forth in federal and local policies.

WIPS certified Program to Date data as of quarter ending 06/30/2022 reported one hundred seventeen (117) individuals served. Accordingly, sixty-two (62) individuals were placed in a disaster relief employment. Individuals that meet eligibility as a dislocated worker, as defined in WIOA, are co-enrolled in WIOA Title I and may received expanded career services to support their education, employment, training, and support services needs to enhance their employability not otherwise supported by the NDWG grant.

In PY2021, the grant was set to expire on 03/31/2022. A modification request was submitted to USDOL ETA for a one year extension on the period of performance that included additional funding to increase enrollment from 77 to 100 disaster-relief and humanitarian temporary workers. The CNMI experienced a surge of COVID-19 confirmed positive cases increasing disaster/management activities. Testing sites and quarantine facilities were inundated resulting in the opening of additional test and quarantine sites thus justifying the need for the extension.

# Success Stories

---

## Adult Program

**Davon** entered the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program at the age of 19. He heard about the WIOA Program through his parents who told him, "People tend to go to WIA and get hired really quick". [The WIOA Program is housed under the Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) Division]. He was deemed eligible under the Adult Program and during the assessment shared his interest in the Cooking and Restaurant Industry. He shared, "I've always wanted to try working in a restaurant as a cook and to own my restaurant one day but I had no experience." His Case Manager kept the note and a month away from graduation, he was referred to the Hyatt Regency Saipan for an interview and was selected to participate in their training program. He satisfied the pre-employment conditions within a day's notice and trained as a Food & Beverage Attendant. He admits,



I did have challenges, such as communicating with guests because ... I was a shy person and also had problems with recognizing the menus we were to serve ... I had to memorize each and every one in case a guest asked what was on menu. How I overcame these challenges was by pushing myself to talk to the guests even if I was too shy. I got so used to it that I didn't know how to be shy anymore and with the menus. I studied it every time I clocked into work or even out of work, otherwise I would show the guests I don't know anything about the menu which means I am not fit to be in a 5-star hotel like Hyatt. But I proved myself and others wrong by studying every single day and I got used to it as well. It takes time to memorize everything when you're new but being in Hyatt for 1 year and 6 months has got me somewhere.

Although Davon has exited our Program, we continue to touch bases with him and find him at the Hyatt with a shy smile working in one of the international cuisine restaurants. It's Programs like WIOA that give our Participants these opportunities to break out of their shells and pursue their interests that lead to gainful employment.

## Dislocated Worker Program

When **Lisa's** job as a Laundry Attendant was affected in March 2020 owing to the COVID-19 Pandemic, she looked to CNMI Department of Labor- Workforce Investment Agency for help in retraining. She was able to make the move with the Work Based Training program. Thanks to program and transitioning to her new job, Lisa shares her great appreciation, "Glad I'm working at Hyatt now." Lisa's financial situation had improved to the point that she purchased a car and live more comfortably. Lisa shared

that having the ability to interact with diverse people every day has been invaluable in terms of both her professional development and personal growth. Being new to the hospitality industry, she found the fast-paced environment at Hyatt to be challenging, but eventually adjusted and was able to perform daily tasks independently.



**Louella** is a naturalized US citizen who originally came from the Philippines. She studied Health at the University but was not able to complete her degree plan. She eventually relocated to the island of Tinian where she took up a job as a Poker Attendant. She found her husband and was blessed with 2 children. When her husband fell sick and required medical treatment in Saipan, she made arrangements to live with her daughter, at the time, was attending college. Louella additionally had to quit her job working at the Tinian Municipal Treasury Office. After her husband passed, she then picked up a job working as an accounting assistant for Delta Management Corporation. She provided three years of service and

could not be spared from termination as the Pandemic affected operations. She then relocated back to Tinian where she heard from a family member that the Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) Division was taking applications. Staff from the Department of Labor WIA were on Tinian and were able to receive, assess and determine Louella was eligible for services under the National Dislocated Worker Grant. She received temporary employment assisting the COVID-19 Taskforce.

She added, "I would certainly recommend WIA services to others because WIA help people that are looking for jobs have access to employment, training and other services

could not be spared from termination as the Pandemic affected operations. She then relocated back to Tinian where she heard from a family member that the Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) Division was taking applications. Staff from the Department of Labor WIA were on Tinian and were able to receive, assess and determine Louella was eligible for services under the National Dislocated Worker Grant. She received temporary employment assisting the COVID-19 Taskforce.

She shared,

I was scared to get the virus but was not worried because I always used my personal protective equipment, washed, and sanitize my hands very often. My daughter who was working in Saipan was on reduced hours during that time. She had a car loan, apartment, and utilities to take care of but her salary was not enough to cover everything. I knew I had to help her and it motivated me to keep working till she got a stable job. If asked if the temporary work helped me in any way.... Yes! Definitely! I am very thankful for the opportunity to work under the WIA program. I am now working at the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation in Tinian as a Warehouse Technician and also currently taking online college courses at the Northern Marianas College.

She added, "I would certainly recommend WIA services to others because WIA help people that are looking for jobs have access to employment, training and other services to enable them to get the skills to successfully get into the job market." We are humbled by Louella's story and all the others that have come through our doors with their varying histories. Participants like Louella are the walking billboards of tenacity and opportunities taken that allow for successful outcomes of the WIOA Program.



## Youth Program

**Antonia** a student at Saipan Souther High School wanted to gain work experience and thus needed job exploration. Every year, our WIOA Program partners with the Public School System to provide supplemental subsidies to the Youth Programs. She became eligible for WIOA services and gained more than she imagined. While in school she took up Cooperative Training known locally as CoOp Class and was able to land placement with the Commonwealth Election Commission. She graduated from High School in June of 2021 and



kept hopes of employment with the Commission. As luck may have it, a vacancy at the Election Commission opened up and she applied. Antonia was hired on November was later hired full-time as an Election Commission Clerk earning more than the minimum wage. She shared, "This is my first job and now we are in the busy season ... I love the interaction especially now. I have awesome coworkers and the best Boss!" We got a chance to speak with her Father and he shared so much pride for Antonia as such a young disciplined adult.



**Dmetri** learned about WIOA Programs for youth during his Cooperative Training Class as a Junior. He shared with his Case Manager deep interest in the Army. Under CoOp Class, he did Work Base Learning with the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (DFEMS) on Rota. As a Senior, he did job exploration and work experience at the local hardware store as a Store Clerk. This experience fueled his occupational dream. Before the training could end he caught news of the Rota Fire Department opening up an Academy and jumped at the opportunity to submit his application for Fire Cadet. He endured the Fire Academy, but he could not shake off his dream of being in the Armed Forces. On October 19, 2021 he enlisted with the Guam Recruiting Company. Dmetri is the eldest of 3 siblings and is the first if his immediate family to join the Armed Forces and continues to be on active duty in the mainland today.



# Challenges

---

## **Economy and the Workforce**

The CNMI's economy has yet to fully recover from the back-to-back typhoons and the ongoing pandemic leaving thousands of CNMI residents out of work. Tourism is the CNMI's principle economic driver and while we have begun to see more visitors the numbers are quite low in comparison to pre-pandemic times. This is impacting the workforce as Leisure and Hospitality is experiencing slower recovery.

## **Unified Case Management**

An ongoing challenge of the CNMI's Core Partners is the lack of a unified case management system for all required partner programs to utilize. This presents difficulties in meeting the intent of WIOA to strategically align the core programs and improve coordination to better serve job seekers and employers. Moreover, it presents greater challenges in meeting the goals in our Unified State Plan to strengthen the collaboration and expand to develop a comprehensive, integrated, effective, streamlined service delivery system.